

similar instances, without diminution of the abhorrence by familiarity with them ; the consequence might be that you would acquire the spirit of Draco* or Minos, f

It is easy to imagine the impression of a few atrocious facts on an ardent constitution, converting a humane horror of cruelty into the vindictive fanaticism of Montbar, the Buccaneer. J A person of gentler sensibility, by accidentally witnessing a scene of distress, of which none of the circumstances caused disgust toward the sufferers, or indignation against others as the cause of the suffering, having once tasted the pleasure of soothing woes which perhaps death alone can terminate, might be led to seek other instances of distress, acquire both an aptitude and a partiality for the charitable office, and become a pensive philanthropist. The repulsion which has struck the observer of some extravagance of ostentatious wealth, or some excess of frivolity and dissipation, and acted on him again at sight of every succeeding and inferior instance of the same kind, with a greater force than would have been felt in these inferior instances, if the offensive effect did not run into the vestiges of the first indelible impression, may produce a cynic or a mis&r, a recluse or a philosopher. Numberless other illustrations might be brought to show how much the characters of human beings, entering on life with unwarned carelessness of heart, are at the mercy of the incalculable influences which may strike them from any point of the surrounding world.

It is true that, notwithstanding so many influences are acting on men, and some of them apparently of a kind and of a force to produce in their subjects a notable peculiarity, comparatively few characters determinately marked from all around them are found to arise. In looking on a large company of persons whose dispositions and pursuits are substantially alike, we cannot doubt that several of them

* Draco, an Athenian lawgiver, whose code punished almost all crimes with death.

f Minos was a king and lawgiver in Crete, and so distinguished for his incorruptible justice, that, after death, he was made supreme judge in the lower regions.

J See "A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies," translated &*n the French of the Abbe Raynal, 8 vols., London, 1783.